

MADE IN AMERICA

by

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Revised

**PREFERRED
ARTISTS**

Talent Agency

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ACT I

A brick wall extends across the upstage area. There is an open doorway at its center. The locations in which the action takes place will be identified by the characters carrying on props. Several clothes hooks on the wall allow for the hanging of garments which also serve to locate the action.

At the moment we are in the McAVOY house, in a working class area of Boston. There is a calendar from a Chinese Restaurant on the wall. A bomber jacket and a woman's coat hang on the hooks. There is a small table at downstage right with an elaborate salt and pepper set made in the Black Forest.

As the audience arrives, the actors are in place. They are MATT and FRANCIS McAVOY who are asleep on a convertible at upstage left. A portable radio is on the blanket next to MATT and he is connected to it by an earplug.

As the house lights fade, the early gray morning diffuses itself over the scene. After a moment a distant but clear IRISH TENOR fades in, singing a spirited folk song, "Wild Irish Rover". Matt stirs restlessly, as he seems to be listening to it in his sleep. The voice now starts fading away and MATT strains to hear. It becomes even more faint and frustrated, he suddenly sits up, eyes still closed. The abrupt movement yanks free the earplug and the sound blares forth from the speaker. MATT awakens and the TENOR is gone.

NEWSCASTER

....with four runs in the bottom of the ninth evening. Carl Yazstremski was again the hitting hero with a two run pinch double. Mike Torrez. who pitched the last two innings in relief was...

(MATT quickly turns off the radio and looks down at his wife to see if the noise has awakened her. She sleeps on. He sits there a moment, waiting for the sleep to drain out. Now, he stands up. Dressed in undershirt and shorts, his

(Continued)

forty six year old body seems in fairly good shape, with some traces of fat beginning to appear. As he finally gets his body to move, he reaches back into the bed for a hot water bottle on which he has been sleeping. He picks up the radio, gathers his clothes from a chair and wanders into the main playing area in front of the wall. He squints into the morning light coming from an off stage window and turns away, unimpressed. He places the radio on the table.

MATT

Good morning, America. Here is the news.

(He turns on the radio and starts dressing)

NEWSCASTER

...has produced a severe economic crisis. A report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the record unemployment is taking a severe toll of the nation's buying power. Retail sales throughout the country are down and economists predict that the number of bankruptcies is expected to keep rising.

MATT

Happy days are here again.

(He picks up the hot water bottle and starts toward the doorway. The distant tenor is heard with the lament of the "Bard of Armagh." He stops and then as if he willed it, the voice stops. He exits)

NEWSCASTER

(Simultaneously)

General Motors has announced that its new models will carry only a slight increase of between two and three hundred dollars. The auto maker blames the rise on the higher cost of material. The Company has also announced that its Tarrytown, New York plant will go on furlough starting the first of next month.

(Slight pause)

From Washington comes word that higher costs are also forecast for housing, food and clothing.

(MATT comes back thru the doorway with milk, a box of cornflakes and a plate)

NEWSCASTER(Continued)

Major appliances are said to be next in line for a boost in prices.

MATT

Filene's used to give you a suit for twenty two fifty. With two pairs of pants.

(He is at the table preparing his breakfast)

NEWSCASTER

From Detroit comes word that Chrysler workers are rejecting their recently negotiated contract by more than a three to one margin. The U.A.W. is expected to call upon the company for a new round of bargaining talks.

As the radio drones on, it awakens FRANCES. In her early forties, she is still an attractive woman. She rises and closes the convertible, then positions it so that it is a couch for the living room. She goes off.

NEWSCASTER(Simultaneously)

Unrest appears to be spreading among the nation's farmers as well. With a battle shaping up in Congress, there is talk of a march on Washington.

MATT

Let 'em eat cake.

(The TENOR fades in, still from a distance...singing "Four Green Fields". MATT appears to daydream for a moment, then continues his perfunctory eating)

NEWSCASTER

The U.N. Delegate from Pakistan will seek consent from the General Assembly this morning for the representative of the Afghanistan People's Resistance to take part in the debate on the Soviet invasion. With the Russian bloc leading the opposition, the move is expected to fail.

MATT

They pulled the same shit on Haile Selassie.

(FRANCES, now dressed, enters from the doorway carrying a coffee pot. She comes to the table and automatically shuts off the radio while plugging in the coffee)

NEWSCASTER (Simultaneously)

The nuclear disarmament talks in Geneva got underway yesterday with a procedural argument among the delegates. The United States and the Soviet Union are trying to get competing resolutions on the agenda. Ambassador Konstantine Nic..

(He has been shut off)

FRANCES

Why do you listen? It's always the same.

(MATT hasn't heard her. He is
listening to the TENOR)

FRANCES(Continued)

I think it's a recording.

FRANCES (Continued)

(Not getting a response, SHE looks at him)

Matt? Wake up! They shot Lincoln.

(The TENOR is abruptly shut off as MATT looks up)

MATT

I drank my juice.

FRANCES

I said the news is always the same. Why do you listen?

MATT

I don't want to miss anything.

(SHE looks down at his plate resignedly)

FRANCES

I'm glad I bought hot cereal.

MATT

What time you due in?

FRANCES

Seven.

MATT

How come you're up?

FRANCES

Let me make you an egg.

MATT

You want to hear about cholesterol? Turn the radio back on.

FRANCES

Is that what they talk about all night? Every time I turn around you've got that plug stuck in your ear.

MATT

People keep calling up. They can't sleep but they put me to sleep.

(HE pushes back his chair)

A lot of wisdom there. One of them last night, he said he knew he was getting older when every time he woke up, it was Monday morning.

FRANCES

A philosopher.

MATT

Late at night, everybody is.

FRANCES
They're lonely.

MATT
A woman was complaining it was better in the fifties.

FRANCES
What was?

MATT
Cars, washing machines, kids, the air, the Red Sox. Life.

FRANCES
You ought to listen to music. You wouldn't get in so much trouble.

(HE gets up from the table)

FRANCES (Continued)
What time did she say it? The woman.

(HE looks at her)

MATT
How should I know?

FRANCES
You've got a watch.

MATT
I don't sleep with my eyes open.

FRANCES
You mean you heard it when you were sleeping?

MATT
You're very funny this morning.

FRANCES
I was just wondering if it was when I put my arm around you.

(He has started toward a lunch box
on a chair but hesitates..his back to her)

FRANCES (Continued)
No. I suppose you were asleep then.

(HE continues on to the lunch box)

MATT
I made my lunch before I went to bed. A chicken sandwich.

FRANCES
You didn't have to do that.

MATT

You handle enough sandwiches. You don't have to worry about mine.

FRANCES

Did you put on some mayonnaise?

(He removes an apple from his pocket and places it inside the lunch box)

MATT

I don't believe in it.

(SHE wants to talk to him but hesitates ... busying herself at the stove)

FRANCES

(Suddenly)

Were you?

MATT

Was I what?

FRANCES

Asleep. When I got close. When I kissed you.

MATT

Are you kidding? When I get the signal, don't I go?

FRANCES

(Slight pause)

It was better in the fifties.

MATT

You must be having a hard time at confession.

FRANCES

Well, Father Dominick always asks if I had any carnal desires.

MATT

(Indignant)

What kind of thing is that to ask a woman?

FRANCES

He is a priest.

MATT

An Italian priest.

FRANCES

I don't lie, Matt.

Frances ... c'mon.

MATT

It'd be a sin.

FRANCES

What are you telling him?

MATT

You know I can't say.

FRANCES

I'm your husband. If you've got any carnal desires, you tell me.

MATT

What do you think I was doing last night?

FRANCES

(Defending himself)
I was asleep.

MATT

Listening to some woman complaining about bad air.

FRANCES

I'm going to miss the bus.

MATT

Say five Hail Marys and give a coin to a needy person.

FRANCES

When the day comes that the Pope says we can have lady priests, God forbid, then you can start giving out benedictions.
(HE puts on the the bomber jacket and starts out)

MATT

You want anything special for dinner?

FRANCES

(HE hesitates)

I'll be a little late.

MATT

Where you going?

FRANCES

(Evasive)
I have to pick something up at the store.
(HE starts out again)

MATT

They give you credit on the bus?

FRANCES

(He stops)

FRANCES

You left your wallet.

(She fishes it out of her pocket
and tosses it to him)

Try not to walk in front of the bus...all right?

MATT

Not 'til I pay the insurance.

(He turns to leave but then comes
back to kiss her)

Don't let the Greek run you around today.

(He goes out as she looks after
him with a quiet concern)

A factory whistle sounds and STEVE, a young worker, enters from upstage. He carries a bench which he places downstage. Behind him, FRANCES removes her coat from the wall and exits. STEVE has a knapsack on his back. Getting ready for the long day ahead, he takes a slow, exaggerated stretch. He now plops down on the floor and performs a series of rapid pushups.

EUGENE, a neatly dressed black man of thirty, enters upstage, pausing to hang up his safety hat on the rear wall. As he comes forward, he is forced to step over the exercising STEVE. But as EUGENE'S foot brushes him, he collapses.

STEVE

Hey.

EUGENE

You got the wrong place, Steve-oh. Jack LaLanne is around the corner.

(STEVE sits on the bench and removes
some work shoes from his knapsack which
he will put on with below)

STEVE

I wish this was Jack LaLanne.

EUGENE

What are you going to do with all those muscles? Only one that counts you already developed.

(He gets a whiff of an unpleasant odor)

EUGENE(Continued)

Goddamn! Smitty filled up his thermos again.

(He hurries to find something in an old athletic bag marked, ROXBURY H.S. ...and comes up with an aerosol can he immediately begins spraying)

You light a match to that son of a bitch, he'd burn for a hundred days and nights.

(Matt enters, hangs up his safety hat and gets an accidental spray in the face)

MATT

Eugene! For Christ sakes!

(He pulls out a handkerchief and wipes his eyes)

You want to blind me?

EUGENE

Just trying to improve the working environment.

MATT

How come it smells like horseshit?

EUGENE

That's how it works. One smell kills the other.

MATT

Has that stuff been tested on mice?

EUGENE

Tell you the truth, I'd like to test it on Smitty.

MATT

Why don't you hit him over the head? Maybe he'll get the idea he's not socially acceptable.

STEVE

He doesn't even know what year it is.

MATT

The man's a drunk. Not an idiot. Why don't you lay off?

EUGENE

How we going to do that when Mr Beckman keeps coming over to our station to see if he's still standing up.

MATT

What's it your problem?

EUGENE

It's our problem 'cause while Mr Beckman's on his little inspection tour, he's inspecting us at the same time. And that... makes me nervous.

MATT

You mean you're worried about your job?

EUGENE

No. I'm independently wealthy.

(Angrily)

Damn right I'm worried. That's a cold world out there.

MATT

Well, you sure fooled me. Half the time you work like you're doing them a favor. Screw the job. Just give me the paycheck.

EUGENE

You want pride from us, that it?

MATT

Now you got it! But you don't want to be bothered with any of that, right? It's all a crock.

EUGENE

You and me, we're living in two different worlds. I've got pride coming out of my ears. Maybe they sweet talked you into working like an old mule all your life but that's not going to my way. What for? So I can wind up like your friend Smitty? Nursing a bottle?

MATT

You see me doing it? And what the hell business is it of yours what he does. He's put in over twenty three years on the line and he's done the job. Sometimes he crawls out of here at night, he can hardly raise his head. How many of you paid those dues?

(Pause. Eugene picks up his gear)

EUGENE

I can't argue with any of that. My problem is ... they just used the man up.

(HE turns and exits. STEVE is embarrassed at MATT's silence. HE seems about to say something but instead HE turns and goes out. MATT looks Off in the direction THEY have gone and then sits down on the bench. The lights dim slightly and a spot picks up MATT. We hear the distant VOICE of the IRISH TENOR in "The Black Calvary. After a few bars, the bell in the mill jars us and we hear the machinery start up. The surge of power dims the light for a moment. We can barely hear the singing above the mill sound but MATT continues to listen. Another moment goes by and then BECKMAN comes in. HE is MATT's foreman, a plump, energetic man in his thirties. As HE comes into the circle of light HE stares down at MATT whose mind is obviously not here. BECKMAN's style is usually to cajole and patronize. HE is very sure of his status. HE snaps his fingers in front of MATT)

BECKMAN

Good morning.

(The spot goes out abruptly as the TENOR is cut off and the room lights come on. MATT embraces BECKMAN)

MATT

Okay, honey. Let's go upstairs.

BECKMAN

Comon, cut it out!

(MATT looks at BECKMAN and ostensibly sees him for the first time)

MATT

(Apologetic)

Excuse me. I'm sorry. I thought I was in a Waikiki whorehouse.

(HE crosses to his locker)

Best days of my life, the navy.

BECKMAN

Well, if you have to day dream, I guess a whorehouse is as good a place as any.

MATT
(A quick glance)
I guess.

BECKMAN
I didn't see you on the line, I thought maybe something happened.

MATT
I dreamed I didn't have the two dollars.

BECKMAN
I would have given you the money. I don't want anything to happen to my best worker.

MATT
You're a generous man, Mr. Beckman.
(MATT is changing into safety shoes)

BECKMAN
Relax, Matt. I'm not management.

MATT
You will be.

BECKMAN
Not if the crews keep slacking off. You see the way some of the work is going through? You can break off the welds with your hand.

MATT
It's the Japanese. Very short people. They're hiding all over the place.

BECKMAN
Matt, this is serious.

(MATT looks up ... willing to listen)

MATT
What's the problem?

BECKMAN
Dominoes. Corporate pushes management ... management pushes me ... I push the men.

MATT
Who do we push?

BECKMAN
Yourselves. Matt, I'm going to level with you. They're tightening the screws ... chopping out the deadwood. I need my key people to produce. I need you.

MATT

Right.

BECKMAN

You know I'm your friend.

(MATT is responding with an exaggerated animation)

MATT

I know that.

BECKMAN

You cooperate with me ... I cooperate with you. Quid pro quo.

MATT

Right down the line.

(BECKMAN shows an irritation at the mimicking)

BECKMAN

This isn't funny, Matt. I'm trying to give you a break.

MATT

You're right. It's not funny. Not funny at all. But you're doing this all wrong. This is a locker room. The home of inspirational speechmaking. The home of Knute Rockne, Woody Hayes, Pop Warner, Bear Bryant, Joe Paterno...

BECKMAN

Okay, I tried.

(HE turns to go but MATT gets quickly in front of him ... ready for his coach's exhortation)

MATT

I want you to go out and give me everything you've got. You're not doing this just for yourselves. It's for every man, woman and child whose hearts are out there with you. Just remember! It's not enough to fight. It's the spirit we bring to the fight that decides victory or defeat.

(MATT moves around the locker room, exhorting the "players")

The spirit of determination, courage and plain guts is going to decide the winner. It's all up to you. Your fate is in your own hands.

BECKMAN

McAvoy...don't be stupid.

MATT

And remember...when the Great Scorer in the sky comes to write against your name, he marks..not that you won or lost..but how you played the game. Remember that, men...'cause it's the biggest piece of bullshit you're ever going to hear in your whole lives. You want to win this game? Then go out and kill those sons of bitches. You hear me? Kill! Kill! Kill!

(He whirls to get his safety hat,
jams it on his head and runs out to
do combat)

The light goes out on Beckman and simultaneously comes up downstage left. It is lunch hour in the mill yard. A volley ball game is in progress off stage and we can hear the cheering and shouts of the men.

VOICE ONE

I got it...I got it..

VOICE TWO

Get out of my way.

EUGENE'S VOICE

Open your eyes.

STEVE'S VOICE

I thought you were going to take it.

(There is another burst of
cheering and then the volley
ball bounds on to the stage,
immediately followed by Eugene)

EUGENE

(Yelling behind him)

I told you, didn't I? Anything near the net is mine.

(He retrieves the ball and bounces
it in irritation as Matt enters with
a folding chair and large book)

Hey, Mac, you want to get in the game?

MATT

I'm digesting my lunch.

VOICE ONE

Where's the goddamn ball?

EUGENE

(Punches the ball offstage)
Who serves?

(He runs off. Matt opens the chair
and settles down with his book.
He finds the sun in his eyes and
moves the chair. As he begins to
read...)

VOICE TWO

Where you goin'?

(Steve backs onto the scene)

STEVE

I'm bushed.

VOICE ONE

Hit the ball, will ya?

(Steve turns and sees Matt.
He lies down in exhaustion and
stretches)

STEVE

I think we're all crazy. We hollar about them speeding up the
line and then we run around out here like maniacs.

MATT

Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid day sun.

STEVE

(Lifts his head in surprise)
That's Noel Coward.

MATT

Sir Noel. You know his songs?

STEVE

(Moves into a sitting position)
That's what I was going to ask you.

MATT

I figured.

STEVE

Well, how do you? I mean I wouldn't think he was your style.

MATT

I heard him once when I was at Oxford

(Steve accepts the statement then
has a doubt)

Oxford?
STEVE

King's College.
MATT

(Steve gives up and lies back
with his face to the sun)

STEVE
God, I miss the beach.
(Sits up suddenly)
What's this about you and Beckman? I hear you had a fight.

MATT
Did we? I thought he was trying to motivate me.
(Attempts to read)

STEVE
What happened?

MATT
Nothing. He tried to give me a pep talk and it ended up I gave
him one.

STEVE
He say anything about layoffs?
(Matt lowers the book)

MATT
You trying to pump me?

STEVE
I'm just trying to find out if he told you anything.

MATT
You're starting to talk like Mr Beckman.

STEVE
You'd know if something was happening. You've been here long
enough.

MATT
Well, that part's true.

STEVE
It's nervous time. We hear all kinds of rumors.

MATT
Steve, I don't want to hurt your feelings but I have to get
this book back to the library. Okay?
(He reads and Steve seems to comply.
But after a moment, he leans over
to read the title)

STEVE

"A Thousand and One Questions Answered About the Mineral Kingdom."

(Surprised)

I took geology in college.

MATT

(Interested)

You go out on any field trips?

STEVE

You kidding? I got out of those.

(MATT shakes his head and resumes reading)

STEVE (Continued)

What a waste. College is just a bunch of crap.

MATT

Attaboy. I'm bustin' my hump here so my kid can go to college for seventy five hundred a year and you tell me it's all crap.

STEVE

Well, it is. What do you think I quit for? It's just one big vacuum. I wanted to join the real world.

MATT

Well, you came to the right place. It's very real here.

STEVE

I'm not saying this is my life's ambition but for now, I think I feel a little content.

MATT

Christ, if my son talked like you ...

STEVE

How do you know he doesn't?

MATT

Because he's still up there and when he leaves, he knows he's going to have a whole life ahead of him. He'll be walking out of that college with credentials. He'll be a qualified man.

STEVE

What do you think we are?

(MATT gives him a pitying look and attempts to resume reading)

STEVE (Continued)

You think anybody can just walk in and do our job? You don't think it takes skill?

(MATT looks up)

MATT

Yeah. I suppose.

(Tries to go back to the book again)

STEVE

I earn my pay. I work damn hard for it. Some of the guys I went to school with would have a heart attack if they worked on the line.

(MATT runs out of patience)

MATT

What do you want ... a medal? Okay, you got it. The Royal Order of the Blue Collar. And if you play your cards right, next week I'll make you a Knight of the Garter. Now can I read my book?

(STEVE hesitates and is about to turn away ... then ...)

STEVE

You surprise me.

(MATT looks up sharply)

STEVE (Continued)

You're one of the few men who really does the job. You don't let anything get through. I used to watch you when I started. See the way you did it. I learned from you.

MATT

All right, let's have a discussion. I'm a hero, that it? A working man. Just like you. Great. We're the kind who built this country and we're going to go on building it. Shoulder to the wheel ... nose to the grindstone. That's what made America a giant. And you're going to make sure we stay that way. My God ... I do sound like Knute Rockne.

(HE leans over ... very confidentially)

Listen, kid. I'm going to do you a favor. Biggest favor of your life.

(A dramatic pause)

Quit!

STEVE

Quit?

MATT

Quit!

STEVE

What do you mean ... quit? What am I going to live on?

MATT

I know the problem. I didn't say I knew the solution.

(STEVE starts to move away)

STEVE

Thanks.

MATT

I'm serious.

(STEVE stops)

MATT (Continued)

You don't really see this place. Your eyes are too young. And you're excited. Something's getting done and you're part of it. But wait'll the glaze wears off. Then you'll see what it really is. Two toilets and three hundred men. Trouble is ... by then you'll be used to it.

STEVE

I don't have any illusions.

MATT

That's right. You went to college.

STEVE

But conditions are going to get better. We'll change things.

MATT

I forgot. You didn't graduate.

STEVE

Can I ask you something?

MATT

I'm very good with advice.

STEVE

Yesterday ... when those new molds were coming through.
(HE hesitates)

MATT

What about 'em?

STEVE

I was watching you.

MATT

When do you work?

STEVE

You picked up a wrench and I saw you were going to smack it into the last assembly.

(MATT didn't know HE had been seen)

MATT

I had to tighten a bolt.

STEVE

You were going to hit the mold ... put a dent in it.

MATT

Yeah ... well ...

STEVE

You would have ruined it.

MATT

Not really. I ... I just thought I'd sign it. You know, like a sculptor does. McAvoy ... his mark.

(The whistle sounds, ending the lunch period)

MATT (Continued)

What the hell ... fair's fair. All these years ... the job put its mark on me.

(HE looks up ... embarrassed at his momentary confession. HE finds STEVE sharing that embarrassment)

STEVE

I know it's not exactly the executive suite ... but you've really hated here ... haven't you.

MATT

No. That's the funny part.

(Trying to understand it himself)

I never have.

(HE turns to go but then ...)

I still don't. And some mornings I can hardly get out of bed.

(HE goes Off. The errant volley ball comes bounding out to STEVE who picks it up and bounces it a few times. EUGENE runs On)

EUGENE

Hey, man, we're playin' a game here.

(BECKMAN appears and EUGENE is suddenly all business with STEVE)

EUGENE (Continued)

What you waitin' for? Time to put America back to work.

(They hurry off. Beckman, who had been writing on a clipboard, looks after them and now continues writing as he crosses downstage and exits)

The exterior light of the yard changes to that of the locker room as Matt enters upstage. He hangs up his safety hat and makes his way to the bench. He sits down, weary in body but with a bemused look. He takes off one shoe ..has a thought and then shrugs.

MATT

(He removes his shirt and examines a bruise on his arm. Now he tries to flex his wrist and the effort pains him)

Comon, boys. You've nothing to lose but your arthritis.

(RUTHIE appears upstage and looks into the room hesitantly. She is in her late thirties. An attractive intelligent lady. She sees Matt)

RUTHIE

Matthew?

(Startled by the feminine voice, he turns and then stands up, the shoe in his hand)

MATT

Hello, Ruthie.

RUTHIE

Can I come in?

(As he hesitates)

Am I embarrassing you?

MATT

You're the first woman's ever been in here.

(She looks around as she comes more into the room)

RUTHIE

I can see why

MATT

It's not so bad when they wash the windows.

RUTHIE

(Suddenly)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be doing this. Excuse me.
(She turns to go)

MATT

It's okay.

(She hesitates)

The men are gone.

RUTHIE

I know.

MATT

And where's our friend, Mr Beckman.

RUTHIE

Oh, he's gone too.

MATT

(Absorbs this for a moment)
Did you want to tell me something?

RUTHIE

The MTA raised the fare.

MATT

They're going to do it again, I hear.

RUTHIE

Nothing's like it used to be. They change everything every day.

MATT

That's the truth.

RUTHIE

We're changing too.

MATT

You're right on target.

RUTHIE

So I thought I'd better ask you now than later.

(Slight pause)

Would you like to go out for a drink?

MATT

Hey, Ruthie ... that's nice.

RUTHIE

I'll buy.

MATT

I don't think I'd be good company.

RUTHIE

I'll judge for myself.

MATT

Maybe some other time.

RUTHIE

I guess I didn't do that very well.

MATT

I appreciate it.

RUTHIE

Oh, Jesus, don't be noble. No is no. That's good enough.

(SHE turns to go but HE grabs her arm)

MATT

Wait a minute!

(She looks down at his hand
holding her arm)

RUTHIE

(Whispers)

Help! Rape!

MATT

I mean it. I really appreciate your asking.

RUTHIE

Fine, Okay. Good.

MATT

Now you're angry.

RUTHIE

It shows?

MATT

I'm psychic.

RUTHIE

Wish I was. So I'd know whether to ask you again.

MATT

Ask.

RUTHIE

Well, if they raise the fare next week, you're in trouble.

(She starts off then glances
around)

What's a good man like you doing in a dump like this?

(She goes. He looks after her and
then sits. He changes the other shoe
and then daydreams for a moment. The
tenor's voice fades in with "When
I Was Young".

At stage right, which is in shadow,
a woman wearing black and her face
shielded by a veil, enters. Carrying
flowers and a small American flag, she
kneels at a grave.

Matt rises, retrieves his jacket and
exits. A subdued evening light comes up
in the cemetery, outlining the shapes
of several headstones. After a moment
Matt appears from stage right and comes
to a grave. He stares down and crosses
himself. The widow rises and leaves
silently, carrying off the flag and
flowers.

(Matt notices something on the grave and peers down for a better look. He pokes it with his foot and as he recognizes the object as a condom, he kicks it away with disgust)

MATT

Goddamn animals!

(He gets down on his haunches to look for further signs of desecration)

A blue light appears at stage right and Paul McAvoy appears. Wearing his high school athletic jacket, we see him at seventeen. He carries school books. As the light on him gradually increases and whitens, he moves closer to his father who after a moment, looks up in surprise. The tenor stops abruptly.

PAUL

Hello, Dad.

MATT

Hey, Paul.

PAUL

How you doing?

MATT

Okay. How you doing?

PAUL

I thought maybe we could walk home together.

MATT

You're supposed to be at practice.

PAUL

We got off early.

(He moves to look down at the grave as Matt kicks the offending condom out of sight)

MATT

Look at this place, will you? I pay twenty dollars for annual care and I have to bug them to cut the grass.

PAUL

Uncle Vincent says you come here a lot.

MATT

I wouldn't say that. Maybe on my father's birthday and a couple of holidays.

(He is uncomfortable with his son here and he looks about restlessly)

MATT(Continued)

They promised me they were going to hire some guards. Keep the kids out. You know what they've been doing in here?

(Angrily)

Drinking beer and....having parties.

(He comes downstage to contain the anger)

You ever hear of anyone doing a thing like that? On a grave?

(To change the subject)

What are you studying there?

PAUL

The History of the Civil War.

MATT

Nothing wrong with that.

(Moves away)

It'll be dark soon. You better get started.

(His back is to Paul as he tidies up the grave)

I have to stop off at the drugstore. I'll see you later. .

(Paul remains)

Careful going home.

(Paul waits and Matt now turns to see him still there)

Your mother'll be worried about you.

PAUL

I'd like to stay with you.

(Matt studies him moment and then softens)

MATT

It's all right, son. I don't mind being here alone.

(Encouraging him)

You go on now.

(Paul hesitates and the light on him turns blue and slowly fades as the memory itself is lost. When he is in darkness, he exits)

The light comes up at center stage as Frances enters and begins setting the table for dinner. She opens a paper bag, removes some paper napkins and places them next to the two settings, Now she removes some flowers from the bag that are on the edge of wilting. These are put in a glass as a center piece. Frances now exits upstage.

Matt crosses into the playing space and hangs up his jacket. There is some mail on a chair and he quickly leafs through it. Failing to find the letter he's been waiting for, he drops the others in disappointment and they fall to the floor. Matt exits and reenters a moment later at downstage right carrying a large box. He is now in the basement and a shaded light goes on overhead. As he opens the box, Frances reappears with a basket of rolls for the table.

From the box, Matt removes a stunning assortment of agates, amethysts, fluorite, jasper and other minerals. Their diverse shapes resemble plants and flowers with colors that range over the entire spectrum with deep hues and strains. As he turns on another light, more stones are added to the galaxy. His eyes take them all in. As he turns on a small hand operated polishing wheel, we see a new found

(Continued)

(Continued)

authority and assurance as his artistry polishes a stone and he is lost in his art.

Frances hears the machine as she turns to leave for the kitchen. She sees his jacket and an envelope on the floor.

FRANCES

Matt?

(The machine doesn't permit him to hear)

Matt? Can you hear me?

(She stamps on the floor and Matt looks up as a trace of dust, loosened by the continued stamping, drifts down)

Matt?

(He turns off the machine and retreats a few feet to look up the "basement stairs")

MATT

(Calling up)

I think there's an earthquake.

FRANCES

Eat your dinner first.

(She goes offstage to the kitchen)

Matt studies his stones for a moment and holds one up to the light. He takes a large book on gemstones from the box and makes his way to the dinner table. As he seats himself, he feels a stiffness and accomodates the pain until it passes. He settles himself as Frances enters carrying a casserole.

FRANCES

I didn't hear you come in.

MATT

Neither did I.

(SHE sits down and HE gets up)

FRANCES

Why is it you always get up when I put hot food on the table?

MATT

I forgot to take my medicine.

(HE gets up and crosses to a small chest and pours a drink from a bottle stored inside. He checks the level and sighs)

FRANCES

I see you're angry at Paul.

MATT

Who 's angry?

FRANCES

You threw down the mail again.

MATT

He never wrote in Boy Scout camp. Why should he write in college.

FRANCES

Then who are you angry at?

MATT

I'm not angry. I'm disappointed.

(HE crosses back to the table. HE picks up a small glass of grapefruit juice)

I was expecting a letter. What's this?

FRANCES

Vitamin C.

MATT

You've been looking at Readers Digest again.

FRANCES

One of my customers told me. He reads a lot about nutrition.

(HE picks up the small paper napkin and also indicates the rolls)

MATT

The Greek know you've been coming home with the store?

FRANCES

I didn't have time to go shopping.

(HE leans over, sniffs the flowers)

MATT

What kind of flowers are these? They're all smelled out.

FRANCES

My customers don't complain.

MATT

If they do, just drop some hot soup on their bazoo.

(HE eats as SHE keeps staring at him.

HE looks up and it makes him uncomfortable)

What are you doing?

(SHE fails to reply. Instead, SHE eats and stares)

MATT (Continued)

Comon, will you?

FRANCES

Why don't you go see Dr. Kelley?

MATT

(Looks up quickly)

What for?

FRANCES

You're going through change of life.

(HE is relieved)

MATT

We can't have any more kids. What's the difference?

FRANCES

I don't like the way you're acting. You come home late ...
I don't know where you are. All of a sudden, you've got secrets.

MATT

I wish to Christ I did.

FRANCES

Who you expecting a letter from?

(The doorbell rings. MATT rises ...
glad to change the subject)

MATT

I'm only forty six. What do you mean ... change of life?

(HE goes Off to answer the bell.
SHE looks concerned and now just
picks at her food as we hear the
door open)

VINCENT'S VOICE

(An affected brogue)

A good evenin' to you, Mr. McAvoy. And sure it's good to see your darlin' face again.

(FRANCES reacts to the VOICE by grabbing her plate and disappearing into the kitchen)

MATT'S VOICE

(His Irish act)

Blessed Saint Vincent. Did you have to send me your name-sake this evenin' just when I was enjoyin' a pleasant dinner with me dear wife.

(We hear the front door close and the TWO MEN appear. Vincent is fifty)

VINCENT

Never mind the saints in heaven when you've got one of your own here in this very house.

(HE enters fully expecting to see FRANCES. HE is importuning heaven and doesn't see SHE is absent)

It's truly blessed you are, Frances darlin' ... for putting up with the likes of Matthew these many years. My uncle would have drunk himself near to death raisin' his glass to your good health seein' what a man you made out of his worthless son ...

(HE abruptly stops as HE now sees SHE is not in the room. MATT enters behind him and also notes her absence)

MATT

She's in the kitchen. Did you eat yet?

VINCENT

Aye.

MATT

(His Irish act resumes)

Then it's proper refreshment you'll be wantin'.

VINCENT

Well said, lad.

(MATT crosses to get the bottle and pours two shots)

MATT

How is everybody?

VINCENT

(The brogue is gone)
Fine, thanks, fine. Rose says hello.

(MATT hands him a glass and raises
it high)

MATT

To the old days.

VINCENT

That breaks my heart ... but I'll drink to it.

(THEY drink)

MATT

Hold out your glass.

VINCENT

I don't believe in social drinking, you know that.
(HE seats himself)

MATT

How are things?

VINCENT

Terrific. Except every time I pick up a paper I want to
cut my throat.

MATT

Who you kidding? You never get past the sports page.

VINCENT

Rose reads to me.

MATT

Least she's talking to you again.
(HE is eating)

VINCENT

About money.

(Troubled)

Matt ... what the hell is going on? I mean ... I had money
in the bank. I was careful. But every time I turn around,
someone's after it. I thought once I had five thousand put
away, I was a millionaire. You know what five thousand buys
today? Two pairs of tires and ten gallons of gas. Christ,
they're stealing us blind.

MATT

Tell me.

VINCENT

I'm running out of banks to borrow from. They talk to each

VINCENT (Continued)

other. The computers. "Listen, you owe Chase Manhattan ... how you going to pay us?" If I lose my job, I'm dead.

(HE falls silent and glances around the room)

Boy, we had good times in this room.

MATT

I'm glad you changed the subject.

VINCENT

The birthday parties for the kids.

(FRANCES enters from the kitchen)

FRANCES

Vincent. How nice.

(To MATT)

Why didn't you tell me?

(SHE busies herself at the table)

VINCENT

I hear you're working, Frances. How's the job?

FRANCES

It gets me out of the house. How's Rose?

VINCENT

Fine. Fine.

FRANCES

You want a cup of tea? I brought home some multi-fruit pie. It's a big seller.

VINCENT

No, thanks. I just finished dinner.

(SHE has settled herself at the table and BOTH MEN feel constrained by her presence. Finally ...)

MATT

Vincent was getting sentimental. He was talking about the good times we had in this room.

FRANCES

The gathering of the clan.

(A pause as EACH MAN is lost in his own thoughts)

VINCENT

I was back at the old neighborhood today.

(MATT looks up in surprise)

MATT

What'd you do? Miss your stop?

VINCENT

I just felt like seeing it again.

MATT

What's there to see. You need a hard hat the way they're tearing it down. Someone's making a buck.

VINCENT

I was at the house. The stoop was still there. And I tried to think back. I was pumping myself up. Remember ... remember ... I kept saying. Like I could go back to it. But it wasn't there. I couldn't see anybody. And I couldn't hear anything.

MATT

Damn lucky you didn't or you'd be in a straitjacket at Bridgewater right now.

(FRANCES has looked up at his quiet intensity but VINCENT is too absorbed in himself to notice his COUSIN's sharp reaction)

VINCENT

Yeah ... I guess. But I just had such a strong feeling to do it.

MATT

You can't play handball anymore, Vinnie. They tore down the walls. You were a damn fool to go back.

(HE shoves the bottle and glass at VINCENT)

The trouble with this wake is there's no corpse.

(FRANCES rises ... goes into the kitchen. MATT is trying to still his own guilt)

MATT

I know what's bothering you.

(VINCENT looks up)

MATT (Continued)

Since your boy took over at St. Michael's, you have to go an extra five miles to Holy Trinity for confession. You can't confess to your own kid. He'd never talk to you again.

VINCENT

I don't notice you paying him a visit.

MATT

What's there to tell?

(HE raises his glass)

To Father Owen. I don't know where he came from but God bless him.

(THEY drink)

VINCENT

It's a big honor of course. But your Paul had the right idea.

(A sharp pain strikes MATT and HE winces)

VINCENT (Continued)

(Concerned)

You all right?

MATT

It's all that Greek food she's been bringing home.

VINCENT

Your Dad would have been crazy for Paul. A silver tongue like himself. He was a great one for debates, you remember. He could quiet a crowd inside of a second when he talked about Cuchalain and the brilliant host of Irish Warriors. They wanted him for politics, you know. I remember when ...

MATT

(Interrupting)

How much do you need?

(VINCENT stops. HE hesitates then ...)

VINCENT

(Embarrassed)

What am I wearing? A sign?

(MATT remains silent)

VINCENT (Continued)

I wouldn't ask but I'm in hock up to my neck.

MATT

How much?

VINCENT

Three hundred.

MATT

(Absorbs it then ...)

Well, you never were a piker.

VINCENT

I've got a mortgage payment coming up. I had it but then I got some bills in. They'll cut off my oil I don't pay 'em. You know what that's gone up?

MATT

I haven't looked for a few minutes.

VINCENT

Listen, if you're tight ...

MATT

Dun and Bradstreet says I'm triple A.

(Rises)

I'll have to go to my savings account. Is tomorrow okay?

VINCENT

You'll get it back, you know.

MATT

Your kid's a priest won't help you if I don't.

VINCENT

I really appreciate it, Matt.

MATT

Well, if I can do it for Rockefeller ...

(Matt is taking him off. They stop and VINCENT turns to MATT. THEY go back a long way together. MATT holds out his hand and VINCENT takes it. The latter is suddenly filled with a wave of feeling)

MATT (Continued)

Give my regards.

(VINCENT cannot reply. HE nods, then turns quickly and goes. FRANCES returns. MATT stands for a long moment and then comes back in as his wife removes her apron)

FRANCES

How much did you give him?

MATT

I thought you were in the kitchen.

FRANCES

That's why he asked.

(Slight pause)

How much?

MATT

A few.

FRANCES

We don't have it.

MATT

What's that got to do with it? He needs it.

FRANCES

Why listen to the radio if you don't hear. There are people sleeping on the street.

(She crosses to a small chest and removes a folder from a drawer..as Matt busies himself at the table with a large gemstone book)

MATT

Did you bring home any rice pudding?

(She comes up to the table and lays the open folder before him)

FRANCES

Which you going to pay first?

MATT

Nobody makes it like the Greeks.

FRANCES

I don't want to fight about money.

MATT

That makes two of us.

FRANCES

But I'm frightened.

MATT

New factory orders rose 1.3 percent in March to an adjusted one hundred and seventy three billion.

FRANCES

I remember the last depression. When my father lost his job. All the fights..all the crying.

MATT

Western intelligence experts report that two years after the invasion of Iran by Iraqi forces, the Iranians are threatening an advance on Baghdad.

FRANCES

How about some news from the domestic front.

MATT

I don't listen to soap operas.

FRANCES

You should. You'd learn a lot about human relations.

MATT

Loose women, horny men and illegitimate kids.

FRANCES

And nice long talks with husbands and wives.

MATT

I told you one thing when we first got started. I'd always take care of you. I'll still take care of you. No matter what.

FRANCES

Don't talk to me that way.

(HE looks up, surprised by her sudden anger)

FRANCES (Continued)

I'm not a child. Stop protecting me. I don't need that. Not anymore. It's all changed. Everything's different now. We're different.

(Hesitates then ...)

I know you want to look out for me. You're good to me. But now ... it's not so easy. I have to be out there with you. Helping.

MATT

You're helping.

FRANCES

Not enough.

(A bare hesitation)

Mr. Drohos says I can work nights. It's more money.

MATT

You asking me or telling?

FRANCES

Both.

MATT

I appreciate the courtesy. A woman out there at night. You know what's going on in those streets?

FRANCES

I'll be all right.

(An attempt at humor)

You told me where to kick.

MATT

You'll need more than that. Forget it! We're not in that kind of trouble yet.

FRANCES

What kind of trouble are we in?

(HE turns to her ... as SHE fixes on him)

FRANCES (Continued)

Maybe it's time you put me in your ear at night instead of that radio. Maybe it's time you started telling me why you hardly sleep anymore.

MATT

Today in Washington the Surgeon General announced that gallstones can be dissolved in some cases by a natural body chemical.

FRANCES

You got wise to Vincent a long time ago. Getting you all sentimental with those stories about your father so he can pick your pocket. You've turned him down. But now, with things so hard, you give it to him. Why? Why this time?

MATT

I told you. He needed it.

FRANCES

When he talked about going back there, it made you so angry. You never do that with him.

MATT

Well, he was stupid.

FRANCES

Going back to where he was happy? Back to his childhood? What was so wrong?

MATT

Because nobody can do that. It was stupid. There's nothing there! They took it all away.

FRANCES

Except what he remembers.

MATT

He's a damn fool. He keeps doing that, he won't know where he is.

FRANCES

Maybe he won't go back anymore.

(Slight pause)

Now that you paid him off ... maybe you won't have to either.

(HE stares at her)

MATT
I haven't been near the place.

FRANCES
Mr Mancuso called to say you left your pen in his store.

(His embarrassment grows and in a sudden anger, HE sweeps the bill folder off the table and the papers scatter)

MATT
The dead stay dead. Nobody changes that. What the hell are we talking about? I promise Vincent a few dollars and you've got me digging up graves.

(SHE looks at him for a moment and then as HE turns away, SHE kneels down to pick up the papers on the floor. This sets him off)

MATT (Continued)
Good evening, America. Here is the news. Dateline, Boston. Now that his gallstones have been dissolved, Matthew McAvoy announces that he has occupied Bunker Hill and that all his enemies ... financial, medical, marital, spiritual and occupational ... can advance at their own peril. Mr. McAvoy has never taken another man's shit and he proposes to adhere to that policy. In addition America's most beloved working-man further states that his equally beloved wife, Frances P. McAvoy has been offered a highly undesirable position by the management of the Tiffany Diner. Since her loyal husband desperately needs what little sleep he can get and does not wish to stay up all night waiting to see if she comes home dead or alive, he has decided to exercise his conjugal rights and to prohibit her from committing suicide. The perverts who prowl the streets of Boston in the evening hours will have to find themselves another patsy. Until happier times, if ever, this is Matthew McAvoy hoping your news will be good news. Good night to you all ... and peace.

(He leaves angrily and we hear a door slam. Frances remains motionless and then slowly gathers up the dishes. As the next action begins, she leaves)

Matt enters at downstage left. He has come outside to be alone and he stares up at the night. We hear the street sounds of an intermittent passing car and someone carrying a radio with a rock program, as it fades on and then away. The blue light of memory slowly appears as we hear the sound of a fire engine approaching in the distance. As the sounds of the fire work themselves in and its glare flickers, a fireman enters, carrying a small child wrapped in a blanket. Vincent, dressed in a sweater and pants of 1950's vintage, follows him as the fireman hurries across the stage.

VINCENT

How is he? Is he bad?

FIREMAN

I don't know.

VINCENT

Who is it? Which one?

FIREMAN

Get out of my way, please.

VINCENT

Who is it?

(But the fireman is gone. Vincent, very frightened, turns back and approaches the fire, staring at it)

MATT

Vincent?

(Vincent doesn't hear him)

It was Michael. Michael got burned in the fire.

(Vincent shields his face from the heat)

We were at the school yard and he went home. Nobody was there. Pop was down at the Shamrock and Mom was out looking for him. Michael was alone. I never knew how it happened. But the house was old. It must have been the wires.

The glare of the flames slowly fade out and their sound is replaced by that of a teletype which is rolled out by Beckman at downstage right. Vincent exits as

(Continued)

(Continued)

Matt crosses to Beckman who is now dressed in a three piece suit and studying the telex. Beckman rips off the message and refers to it as he acknowledges that Matt has entered his office.

BECKMAN

They don't like it. They don't like it at all.

MATT

Who's that, Mr Beckman?

BECKMAN

The home office. They don't like the production figures for the last quarter.

MATT

I guess that hurts the profit picture.

BECKMAN

I get the feeling you really don't care about the profit picture.

MATT

I read in the Wall Street Journal the whole industry's got the same problem. Multi-nationals and the balance of payments are screwing us.

BECKMAN

Only one of us can shoot the shit up here, McAvoy and that's me. So tell me what you want and get back to the line.

MATT

I heard a rumor.

BECKMAN

Never pay attention to rumors.

MATT

This one worries me.
(Slight pause)
You're firing Smitty.

BECKMAN

Where'd you hear that?

MATT

Well informed sources.

BECKMAN

I guess I was wrong. That rumor you can pay attention to. He's gone.

MATT

He's a good worker.

MATT

I'll take it to the shop steward.

BECKMAN

The union's been notified.

MATT

He's got seniority.

BECKMAN

He was fired for cause. Now do you still want to go on with it?

(As Matt hesitates, Beckman can
afford to be magnanimous)

It's really a shame about you, McAvoy. You're a good worker
but you never reached out for anything. It's no accident
I'm upstairs now. It's all a question of attitude.

MATT

Congratulations.

BECKMAN

Just don't be stupid. You've only a few years to go before
your pension. Play out the string. Then you can sit in the
backyard and yell at the moon.

(The telex starts up
again)

Just behave yourself.

(He turns to the machine,
dismissing Matt)

MATT

(Controls his anger)

Pleasure doing business with you.

(He exits as Beckman studies
the incoming message)

BECKMAN

There's nothing I can do.

(The telex chatters and he goes to watch the message arrive)

MATT

He's stood next to me for fifteen years.

BECKMAN

These things happen and they're never easy.

MATT

You know what you're doing to this man?

(Beckman waves for him to be still)

BECKMAN

Excuse me a minute, will you?

(He is studying the incoming message)

MATT

His life is here. He's got nothing else.

(Beckman concentrates on the message)

He's had a tough time. We have to give him consideration.

(Ruthie enters with some manila folders which she is hands to Beckman. She is surprised to see Matt up here. Beckman doesn't reply)

Pay attention to me!

(Beckman turns to him...regards him quietly. Ruthie is startled and her face shows her concern)

BECKMAN

Out of respect for your record here, I'll forget you said that.
(He sees Ruthie is still there)

You can go, Ruth.

(She hesitates and then gives Matt a warning look as she leaves)

Steve and Eugene push on a garish jukebox and go off as Ruthie enters, a drink in her hand. She studies the jukebox, looking for a record. She makes a selection and a mournful blues plays. She moves slowly to the music.

Beckman exits with the telex as Eugene and Steve come back on carrying glasses, a pitcher of beer and a bottle of whiskey. They cross to the table.

EUGENE

Seniority, shit! It's inferiority I'm worried about. They'll hit every black on the line.

STEVE

They pull anything like that, we all walk out.

EUGENE

Only thing getting pulled is my chain.

STEVE

Will you relax? We're all in this together.

EUGENE

That's right. Only some of us are in more than others.

RUTHIE

(Searching for more coins in her bag, she turns with a bill for someone to make change. She starts toward the men but stops as Matt enters)

Well, hello again.

MATT

The same to you.

RUTHIE

You had me worried up there.

MATT

My mother always said only the good die young. We don't have to worry about Mr Beckman, do we.

RUTHIE

I'll buy you a drink and we can talk about it.

(He holds up his glass)

Well, how about me playing your favorite record.

MATT

Ruthie...we're holding a wake over there.

RUTHIE

Private party.

MATT

I'm sorry.

RUTHIE

Yeah. Well, c'est le guerre.
(She turns to go)

MATT

You going to be all right?

RUTHIE

Christ, you're being nice again.

(SHE goes Off. HE hesitates and then joins STEVE and EUGENE)

EUGENE

A foxy lady.

(But it is not in them to talk women tonight)

STEVE

To Smitty.

(THEY raise their glasses and drink)

EUGENE

Fits, don't it? Man gets fired for bein' a drunk and we drink to him.

STEVE

I think he'd appreciate it.

EUGENE

I'll drink to that.

(EUGENE and STEVE drink again, but EUGENE sees MATT hasn't)

You keep foolin' me, man. I thought the Irish were hard drinkers.

MATT

I'm a regular mystery.

EUGENE

You are to me. Everytime we talk unity you go deaf. But they fire a man and you stand up for him. Where you coming from anyway?

MATT

I'm not drunk enough to tell you.

STEVE

Hell, we can fix that.

(HE pushes a few glasses toward him)

EUGENE

You got a responsibility, Mr. McAvoy. You come to a saloon, you gotta drink.

STEVE

Yeah, comon. Loosen up.

(HE and EUGENE clink glasses)

STEVE (Continued)

To the American working man.

(Looks at MATT)

That ought to grab you.

MATT

Right by the short hairs.

(MATT raises his glass)

You want to drink to something? Drink to Wyoming.

(MATT drinks)

STEVE

(Stops his glass in midair)

What's out there.

MATT

I'll tell you what isn't there. Pestilence, pollution and people. That's where I'm going to retire.

EUGENE

Wyoming?

MATT

There's only one problem.

EUGENE

You can't ride a horse.

MATT

(Shakes no)

By the time I'm ready to go, it won't be there anymore.

(STEVE gets up to go for some
more booze. EUGENE leans over to
MATT in confidence)

EUGENE

I like what you did for Smitty. Now let's take
it the rest of the way.

MATT

What way is that.

EUGENE

(Impatiently)

I'm talking layoffs, man. They're going through us like a
dose of salts, we don't stand together.

MATT

You going to preach to me now?

EUGENE

I'm bringin' you the light, Brother. Two hundred years of slavery. A man like you can help make it right.

MATT

I owe you something, that it?

EUGENE

Yeah, you owe us. The whole damn country owes us.

(Hardening)

They pick us off, you think you're safe? We all got a problem.

MATT

You want to get along with me? Don't pull any of that black militant crap. I got no use for it. I don't trust intellectuals... black or white

EUGENE

I'm trying to bring you the gospel, man.

MATT

You're in the wrong church. You're yelling two hundred years of slavery at me while I'm down there in the same damn cotton patch. How do you square that one?

EUGENE

Only one way. We put it together. You, me....every man in there.

(Matt slowly shakes his head)

MATT

You talk like a choir boy.

EUGENE

I'm talking solidarity.

MATT

The Polacks don't have it tough enough. Now we're stealing their ideas.

(Steve returns with the drinks and it takes a moment before he realizes that the talk has turned serious)

EUGENE

Together, man, together.

MATT

Better lower your voice. Some guy'll yell Commie and the whole place'll go up.

EUGENE

Excuse me, I'm talkin' to a deaf man.

(He starts to rise but Matt suddenly grips his arm. Eugene looks down in surprise)

Hey, man, what you think you're doin'.

MATT

For starters, I'm a little sick of that black jive you keep throwing at me like I'm some ignorant honky. We talk the same language so use it. And in the second place, I'm tired of listening to a sermon. So sit down 'cause I'm going to do you a favor. Biggest favor of your life.

(The DRUNK stares at them)

DRUNK

Hey.

(THEY ignore him)

MATT

I bought a flower from an old lady. I gave her a dollar and she said, "Thank you, sir."

STEVE

A Beacon Hill dandy.

MATT

I walked around for a few hours then it was time to go home.

DRUNK

Hey, you work at Morgan's?

STEVE

No.

MATT

I stood on the corner, waiting for the bus. A truck came along. Some men standing in the back. They were laughing, having a good time. They looked down at me and then one guy said something to the other.

(Shakes his head)

Unbelievable.

STEVE

What?

MATT

He opened his pants ..took out his goddamn hose...and then he pissed all over me.

(As STEVE and EUGENE react)

MATT (Continued)

That's right. The son of a bitch yelled "fire" ... and he sprayed it over me like it was four alarms.

STEVE

Jesus.

MATT

I could hear them laughing all the way down Commonwealth Avenue.

(There is a pause and then EUGENE's chair is pushed back. HE gets up and leaves without a word. Surprised, STEVE rises to follow)

(EUGENE hesitates ... then controls his anger and takes his seat as MATT releases his grip)

MATT (Continued)

When I was nineteen years old I went for a walk. Down by the river on a Saturday afternoon. That's what you did when you were young. Look at the river and feel beautiful. The Harvard boys were on the water in those long skinny boats. I heard a band playing somewhere. It was nice. Very nice.

STEVE

What are you guys talking about?

MATT

You used to pick up girls there so I had some good clothes on. New shirt ... tropical worsted pants.

STEVE

You must have had them lining up.

(HE laughs and looks to EUGENE for support but the latter is intent on MATT)

MATT

Some days everything feels right. Other days, it doesn't pay to get out of bed. This was one of the good ones.

(A sullen DRUNK enters and goes to the juke box)

EUGENE

So far I don't hear no advice.

MATT

I'm taking the scenic route. Hold on. It's worth it.

EUGENE

This got somethin' to do with the struggle?

MATT

It's got everything to do with it.

EUGENE

Okay then. The Harvard boys were on the water.

MATT

They were just there. It was me who was important. The way I was thinking. When I walked I could feel every part of me moving. I bet I could have run a hundred miles if I wanted.

STEVE

Hey, Eugene.

MATT

Let him alone. He's thinking about life.

(STEVE is reseated. This story bothers him)

STEVE

I would have killed him.

MATT

I suppose.

(HE takes a drink and looks up to find the DRUNK staring down at him)

What's your pleasure?

DRUNK

My pleasure's to kick your ass.

MATT

Some other time.

DRUNK

What are you ... yeller?

MATT

Rough day, eh?

DRUNK

I know you from Morgan's.

STEVE

We don't work there.

DRUNK

(Ignoring him)

I never liked your face.

MATT

That makes two of us.

(The DRUNK grabs his arm)

DRUNK

Comon. Get up!

(MATT pulls his arm away)

MATT

I don't beat women, drunks or fools. Now pull your head in and go away.

(The drunk is deciding whether or not to push it. He turns and goes out)

STEVE

Maybe we better get out of here.

MATT

Can't.

STEVE

I don't like the looks of that guy.

MATT

We run...we can never come in here again. And you want to be with working men, right?

(He smiles and lifts his glass in a salute. Steve, not very sure of things, decides to put on some music and crosses to the jukebox where he selects some hard rock. As the music starts...

The light fades slightly and the flashing neon of the bar's outside sign shines from offstage left. The drunk appears and lays in wait, holding a heavy chain. He looks in at the scene and then moves into the shadow. Matt finishes his drink and gets up to leave as Steve follows.

They step outside and cross toward where the drunk remains hidden. As Matt comes into his view he steps out..

DRUNK

You son of a bitch...I'll kill you.

(He swings the chain and it catches Matt in the chest. He falls to the ground and Steve instinctively hurries forward to help but the drunk raises the chain ready to strike Steve)

Comon...comon...

(As the drunk advances, Steve turns and runs away. Matt rises with a pent up fury and dives at the man, knocking him to the ground. As the drunk grapples with him, Matt hits him and he reels back and falls. Matt stands over him..fist raised...waiting

(Continued)

(Cont)

(to strike him again but the man just lies there, staring at him. Matt, heaving from the exertion, slowly drops his hand)

MATT

You poor ,dumb bastard.

The lights come up on the McAvoy house as Frances enters. She has come from her job and she hangs up her coat. She leafs thru mail she has brought in. There is nothing for her and she drops it on the table. She exits.

Matt now enters the house. We see, in the light, that his face is bruised but he also feels the pain in his chest. As he readies himself to face his wife, he sees the mail and picks it up. One letter takes his immediate attention and he tears it open. He reads it quickly and reacts with suppressed excitement. . He crosses to what is the basement and turns on the light. Frances enters, having heard him in the living room.

FRANCES

Matt?

(She sees his coat and moves toward the basement where he has put on the light and is now rummaging thru the box where he keeps his stones. Frances enters)

Honey?

(He turns, hiding something as she enters)

You all right? The way you came in.

(She sees the bruise on his face)

You're hurt.

MATT

Never mind. Look at this.
(HE holds out the letter)

FRANCES

Let me clean it up.

MATT

Just read it!

(SHE accepts it and as SHE reads it,
HE watches her. SHE finishes)

FRANCES

You never told me.

MATT

I told you I was waiting for something. This is one of the best Craft Shows in the east. Dealers from all over. They're having it in the Boston Garden. I'm applying for a booth. They get thousands of people. It's become a big business. Here, look.

(HE thrusts the glossy pages of the
Lapidary Journal into her hands and
quickly riffles through them)

My stones are as good as these.

(HE takes out some small drawers from the box)
Rings, necklaces, bracelets. Hell, I could have a show of my own.

(SHE touches his face)

FRANCES

You were in a fight.

MATT

(Laughs)
I'm talking about our future and you're binding up the nation's wounds.

FRANCES

I'll get some peroxide.

(HE stops her)

MATT

This is a news bulletin. Just listen.

FRANCES

You're bleeding.

MATT

I'm a quick healer. And this show is going to put roses in my cheeks. Franny, this is what I've been working for.

MATT (Continued)

What did you think I was doing down here every night? Digging coal? After this show and I see how it goes ... and it's going to be great ... I'll be traveling to a few every month. They hold them all over. You can work every weekend if you want. And you're going to be my assistant. You'll wear tights and no bra ...

FRANCES

Matt ...

MATT

Okay, you can wear pants. But if this pays off the way I've figured it, I can put in for my pension and make enough to tell them all to go fly.

FRANCES

You'll quit?

MATT

With a brass band to see me off. And I'll even throw in a couple of acrobats.

(As HE sees her confusion)

I think I suprised you.

FRANCES

No. No, I was just wondering if I was in the right house.

MATT

McAvoy the Lapidary lives here.

FRANCES

But where are the customers? I know you're all excited, so am I ... but things are hard for people now. Are they going to buy rocks?

MATT

Frances dear, you mustn't say things like that in public. These are not rocks. These are precious gems. They come from millions of years and the rich bounty of the good earth. They dazzle the eye and put a sparkle in the heart. Here ... put out your hand and close your pretty green eyes.

FRANCES

(Suspiciously)

What are you doing?

MATT

It's a sweet surprise.

(SHE finally accedes and closes her eyes)

MATT (Continued)

Your hand, dear lady.

(SHE extends it and HE places a tissue wrapped present in it. SHE opens her eyes)

FRANCES

What is it?

MATT

You've always been my first customer.

(SHE unwraps it and holds up a gold chain on which hangs a polished Brazilian agate. Its soft luminous strains are caught by the light)

FRANCES

It's ... it's jewelry.

MATT

(Laughing and pleased)

Jewelry.

FRANCES

Matt, it's beautiful.

(As HE helps her put it on)

FRANCES (Continued)

Is this what you've been doing down here?

MATT

After I get through with the coal.

(SHE embraces him)

FRANCES

You know what you are?

MATT

I could use some kind words.

FRANCES

An artist.

MATT

(HE absorbs this for a moment. HE is pleased)

Rembrandt.

FRANCES

McAvoy.

MATT

(A pause)

Thank you, Frances.

FRANCES

Any woman who sees this is going to want one just like it.
 (Looks at the array of glittering
 stones)
 They're beautiful.

MATT

You really like them.

FRANCES

I'll wear tights and no bra if it helps. You're going to
 sell these.

(SHE kisses him)

They'd be crazy not to buy them. You're going into business.

MATT

At least it'll be mine. You know, every day at work I told
 myself that what I did was important ... even beautiful in
 its own way. But I'll tell you ... I never really believed
 it. Now ...

(HE holds a stone in his hand. There
 is a pause)

FRANCES

Don't be too long.

(She exits and Matt studies the stone
 a moment more. He gets his machine,
 seats himself and begins
 polishing a stone. The lights fade
 slowly until all we can see are the
 sparks illuminating his face. HE is
 alive ... intent ... working. The
 scene goes dark)

END ACT ONE